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TOWARD A COMMON PURPOSE

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I am delighted to be here this morning to talk with you about our common objective--the very important objective of making the best possible use of our Nation's wealth of natural resources.

The pressures on these resources grow constantly, as I am sure you see in your daily work. The Environmental Fund has mounted a large "population clock" at 18th and N Streets in Washington, near the headquarters of the American Forestry Association. And that clock records that another 250,000 human beings are added to the world each day--to be fed, sheltered, and provided the necessities of life. The population of the United States has increased by 100 million people in the past fifty years, and some project another 150 million increase in the next half-century.

Yet at least three million acres of rural land are taken out of food and fiber production and converted to other uses each year. Secretary Bob Bergland has aptly called that a collision course with disaster.

Americans expect a continuing supply of goods and services from our natural resources...demand a cleaner, healthier, and more attractive environment...believe the expertise and the funds--their tax dollars--are available to accomplish this...and expect their leaders to produce results.

With your help, we will.

Remarks prepared for delivery by Dr. M. Rupert Cutler, Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for Conservation, Research and Education, to the Advisory Committee on State and Private Forestry, Airlie House, Airlie, Va. the morning of April 19, 1978.

We have reached the point in the aspirations of the American people at which we must make better use of our endowment of natural resources--including those associated with our forest lands--by increasing the productivity of lands already managed, by managing more lands, by more completely utilizing the cellulose from our forests--both at harvest and in the mill--and by protecting environmental quality in the process.

Ways to achieve this objective obviously include our cooperative forestry programs, because they offer bright opportunities for improving the protection, management and use of our forest lands.

Certainly, our private nonindustrial forest lands must receive greater attention. The 1973 report of the President's Advisory Panel on Timber and the Environment (PAPTE), for example, stated that, "A major goal of national forest policy must be to achieve, during the period 1990-2020, a relatively high timber harvest from nonindustrial private woodlands. Whether or not this goal will be attained depends largely on measures initiated in the 1970's and 1980's."

Yet, just as we are beginning to understand how to tap the potential which these lands possess--and during the very period the PAPTE report identified as so important to our realization of this potential--the inherent assumptions, effectiveness, purpose, and worth of our cooperative forestry programs are being questioned. Remember, for example, President Ford's policy statement transmitting the RPA documents to Congress in 1975, in which he questioned the need for continuing these cooperative forestry programs?

In his environmental message last year, President Carter indicated concern regarding program effectiveness by asking for an in-depth evaluation of our cooperative forestry programs, while stating his

support for "improving the condition and production of small private forest holdings."

And last fall, here at Airlie House, a workshop on nonindustrial private forest (NIPF) lands sponsored by the Society of American Foresters and Resources For the Future concluded, in part, that there is apparently little reason for concern about the productivity of these lands and raised specific questions about the need for Federal programs in State and private forestry.

Finally, the President's Council on Wage and Price Stability recently has questioned the ability of privately owned forest lands to produce enough additional timber to meaningfully help combat the inflationary impact of escalating lumber prices.

Note, though, the very positive aspect of the President's inflation message before the American Society of Newspaper Editors last week: The President instructed USDA to work with the Department of the Interior, the Council on Environmental Quality, and his economic advisors to find the best way "to sustain expanded timber harvests from Federal, State and private land."

The President recognizes the important potential contribution of State and privately owned lands to the achievement of our national needs.

So let's look again at our common purpose: to make the best possible use of our Nation's forest lands.

Twenty-seven percent of our commercial forest land is publicly owned--either by the Federal government or by State or local government. We have good programs for the protection, management and use of these lands, to increase their productivity and provide for a variety of uses.

Fourteen percent of our commercial forest land is industry-owned. And the corporations are actively managing their lands--investing large amounts of capital, and making good use of the land to produce an economic product. That's an important function.

But here we have 59 percent of the commercial forest land in the United States which is neither publicly nor industry owned: the non-industrial private forest lands. And, with the exception of a handful of programs offered rather tentatively by the Federal government, the States, forest industry, and the consultants, there is no comprehensive program for the management of these lands. And these lands do offer tremendous potential for meeting our fiber and other forest-based needs in the future.

First of all, they encompass a lot of land--296 million acres. When we are working with such a massive land base, even a slight increase in productivity adds up to a large additional volume of product.

Second, the nonindustrial private forest lands are rich in hardwoods. There is no large use of these hardwoods, the economists say; the market for them today varies widely depending on the technology adopted by industry. Yet, considerable portions of these hardwood volumes are being used to make paper. As a result, substantial volumes of softwoods are becoming available for other uses. Our Forest Products Lab in Madison, which has pioneered the development of products and processes which have transformed forestry in our lifetime, reports that many new uses of hardwoods are on the verge of being economically feasible. Our cooperative forestry people in the Northeast, particularly, are working to improve the markets for the vast hardwood resources in their area. There will be more uses and improved markets for the now-underutilized hardwood resource. Don't write it off. You can count on it.

Also remember that many things are produced on or provided by forest lands in addition to trees. This is a major reason why publicly owned forests cannot be the only woodbasket of the nation and the world in the long-run--why the national forests and other public lands cannot unendingly meet increased demands for timber. The public won't stand for single-purpose use of these lands. Their ecological stability must be protected; their non-commodity uses must be given equal management attention.

But then neither can we look to the nonindustrial private forest lands simply as a source of wood. From my experience as an extension forester at Michigan State University, I'm convinced that many of the small woodland owners shun standard economic decision criteria in determining their land-management or ownership objectives. To use the term of Luke Popovich in the current Journal of Forestry, the small woodland owner is a third kind of landowner, a "queer duck...not a profit-maximizer like the industrial forester, nor a fiber-maximizer like the public forester."

There has been valid criticism of our use of the term, "commercial forest land." Bob Jones' and Jim Paxton's editorial in the November 1977 American Forests is the most prominent of these. And I detected a few raised eyebrows when I used the term earlier.

Some of our nonindustrial private forest lands probably should not be considered "commercial forest lands." The ownership size may be too small, the objectives of the landowner too restrictive, or there may be objections to timber cutting on some of these lands which constrain them from producing a commercial crop of timber.

But that doesn't mean we should ignore these lands in our forest management program. Their location, if it is near a metropolitan area or in some other area subject to public pressure, may put them in a prime position to provide some of the noncommodity public benefits-- hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, and so forth--which aren't adequately provided by public or industry-owned lands. And certainly, if these lands are poorly managed, that can result in damage to the quality of the environment or to the productivity of the land.

In short, I believe that the term "commercial forest land" implies a management objective far narrower than the total package of opportunities which our cooperative programs in State and private forestry should address. These programs should be designed to deal with landowner objectives which have little to do with timber production, as well as those which have commodity production as a top priority, to meet the complex desires and aspirations of the American people.

Our urban forestry program is an excellent example of this. Three-fourths of all Americans now live in urban areas, and by the year 2000, ninety percent of us will live or work there. There is an emerging interest, once again, in making our cities decent and healthful places to live.

Urban forestry can make a substantial contribution to the achievement of this goal. The planting and protection of trees in the urban environment can do much to improve the quality of life of vast numbers of Americans who may never set foot on forest land outside the city, to say nothing about the national forests or lands which are owned by forest industry. And our urban forestry program has little to do with commercial forest land.

To those of us who see the benefits of management regardless of the management objective, the greatest problem posed by the nonindustrial private forest lands is not bad management, or poor objectives; it is simply lack of management. Our purpose is to encourage the landowner to manage his or her land--to make a decision as to what he or she wants to do with it. Our purpose is to assist the owner in evaluating the broad range of options available.

We err in our programs if we push only timber production or any other single forestry goal. In our democratic society, the person who determines the best use of the land is the landowner. Our programs should always reflect the individual landowner's situation and his management objective.

We have a great deal that is good in the ways in which we conduct our cooperative forestry programs. They could be duplicated in our approach to other land-use objectives as well. Instead of mandating land-use objectives at the Federal level and using regulatory devices to impose these objectives on States and private landowners, our cooperative forestry programs rely on encouragement and assistance to get the job done.

And our creation of a separate natural resources extension program, the new urban forestry program, a stronger commitment to research for the benefit of all forestry interests, and the new cost-sharing by SCS to implement Section 208 non-point-source pollution abatement planning, should leave no doubt about our continued reliance on education encouragement and assistance to get the job done.

What makes our cooperative forestry programs both noteworthy and effective is that they are programs in which the States and the landowners have the dominant roles in determining what happens on the ground. These are programs in which the Federal government and the State governments are acting together to address common problems--common opportunities--to achieve our common objective of making the best possible use of all our forest lands.

This assures the sensitivity and responsiveness of these programs to the various requirements of each of the States, and their flexibility to reflect the management objectives of the individual landowners. And it makes them effective in helping meet the needs of the American people for products and amenities from our forest lands.

Does the Federal government have a role in encouraging and assisting in the protection, management and use of nonindustrial private forest lands? Yes, it does.

Where we can help inform the private landowner about his basic options, and can help him meet his objectives through technical and financial assistance, the Federal government has an important role, working with the States and supplementing the excellent efforts of the consultants and the forest industry.

Where it is in the public interest to have these lands produce benefits not otherwise available, or not available in sufficient quantity, from public or industry lands, the Federal government has a role.

And where we can provide the necessary technical and financial assistance in managing these lands to assure a high-quality environment and to make America a safe and satisfying place to live, work, and play, we should do so.

We have good programs directed at these lands, programs of proven effectiveness. But we are barely touching the potential which these forest lands offer.

We need to improve our programs...create...innovate...to make them more efficient and effective in achieving the best possible use of privately owned forest lands.

Last month, the five USDA agencies involved in cooperative forestry programs signed an agreement which clearly defines the role of each agency--to eliminate overlap and assure close coordination:

-- The primary technical assistance role belongs to the Forest Service and the Soil Conservation Service.

-- The primary financial incentives role belongs to the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service and the Farmers Home Administration.

-- The primary educational role belongs to the Science and Education Administration, which includes the former Extension Service.

-- And the primary research role belongs to the Forest Service and the Science and Education Administration, which also includes the former Agricultural Research Service and the Cooperative State Research Service.

I am particularly pleased that our many cooperators--including the National Association of Conservation Districts and the National Association of State Foresters--have concurred with this agreement. I trust that this will eliminate battles over agency turf and budgets, and will assure the cohesive, coordinated effort needed to achieve the best possible use of the nonindustrial private forest lands, not to mention taxpayers' dollars.

But, again, I agree with Luke Popovich in the April Journal of Forestry--that our cooperative forestry programs need more imagination, not just more money.

I believe we need to develop innovative programs that address the overall objective of gaining the best possible use of small woodlands, to help satisfy the growing desires and aspirations of the American people. And we have to convince other policymakers of the importance and practicality of this effort.

You can help us improve our cooperative forestry programs, to make sure that they are sensitive to the needs of the American people, to see that tax dollars are spent wisely and efficiently in these programs, and to overcome any lack of coordination or other obstacles which sap their effectiveness.

We will work with you, as well, to make sure that Federal decisions are cognizant of the opportunities and sensitive to the needs of forest management on the nonindustrial private forest lands.

We need your help; we need your ideas, and we need your constructive criticism.

It is time now for greater action on our nonindustrial private forest lands. If we don't believe in what we are doing--or don't care what we do--nothing can overcome the complexities of the obstacles we face. But if we do believe in the importance of the objective, in the potential of our programs, and if we do work together to improve these programs and make them fully effective, their value and their effectiveness will be readily apparent in the improved quality of American life.

